

BRITAIN IN PICTURES
THE BRITISH PEOPLE IN PICTURES

THE GUILDS OF THE CITY
OF LONDON

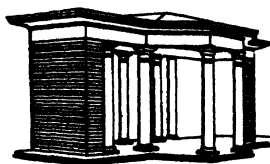
GENERAL EDITOR
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THE GUILDS OF THE CITY OF LONDON

SIR ERNEST POOLEY

WITH
8 PLATES IN COLOUR
AND
19 ILLUSTRATIONS IN
BLACK & WHITE



WILLIAM COLLINS OF LONDON
MCMXXXV

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JOHN GEDNEY, TWICE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON
AND TWICE MASTER OF THE DRAPERS' COMPANY
Drawing from the Wriothesley Mss., early 16th century

EARLY HISTORY: THE FRATERNITIES

THE Livery Guilds of London, usually known as The City Companies, have a long history. Their origin is lost in the misty age of Athelstane and Ina, and there are vague references to Guilds in the chronicles of Alfred and Edward the Confessor. The word itself (from *gildan* "to pay"), is Anglo-Saxon, and some writers of precision prefer to keep that spelling still, though the more common form has been in use for centuries.

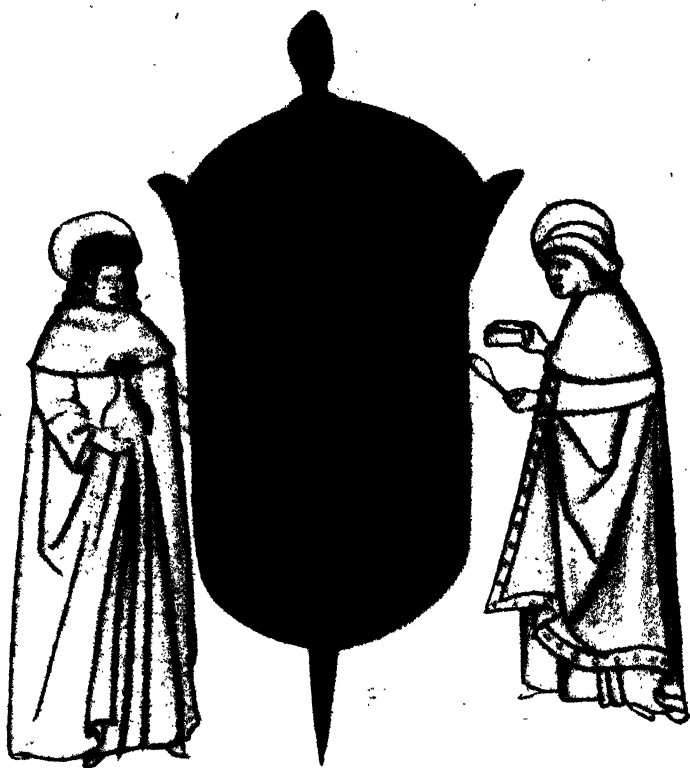
What is certain is that guilds of one sort and another were common all over Europe and in this country during the eleventh and twelfth centuries when the towns were struggling into existence, and grew to exercise a dominant power in their development. The Saxon *frith-gild*, which is the first we hear of by name, was a mutual-protection society divided into family groups, and charged with the duty of arresting social offenders or

making good their defaults. It was a compulsory institution. But the Guilds in which we are interested were voluntary.

It must be understood that the trade element in them was not at first apparent, but was rather an accidental feature, due to the localisation in early times of the various London trades in particular districts. Thus Soper's Lane, which is now Queen Street, was sacred to grocers; tailors inhabited Birchin Lane; drapers gathered in Candlewick; butchers in East-cheap; basket makers in Pudding Lane; and fishmongers on Thames-side. The representatives of these various industries were in the habit of meeting and transacting business together as neighbours, so that it came about naturally that the first voluntary associations to be formed in London were composed of the members of a particular trade.

For cogent reasons these early associations were accustomed to adopt a religious complexion, and were known as Fraternities. Having no common meeting house they chose as their nucleus a neighbouring church, monastery or hospital, to which they attached themselves, and whose saint they adopted as their patron, paying subsidies out of a common fund to provide lights for the altar and services for their deceased. From the general insistence on these items, it may be safe to infer that one of the primary objects of their union was the salvation of their souls. For the middle ages took their religion very grimly, and attached enormous importance to the ceremonies attending their decease. The Guild members made a practice of providing masses for the dead, and mustered in force at their funerals. Money was often left to them specially to ensure the performance of these rites, and in addition a regular contribution was levied from the living under the name of "quarterage," (still sometimes collected). From such sources a fund was gradually accumulated which enabled the Guilds to provide handsome palls or coffin-cloths of gold fabric and embroidery to use at their funerals. A few of these palls which still exist are highly treasured as works of art. In addition, it became customary to pay for the services of a chaplain, as well as for the candles and the like, so that the church gained by the connexion. In return the Guilds obtained valuable protection from the power best able to give it, and were relieved of the risks involved in what might otherwise have been regarded as illegal association.

The religious side of the Guilds or Fraternities has been dwelt on because it has played an important part in their history down to the present day, and has on occasion saved them from persecution. Amongst other things it is of interest as having determined the form of the Guilds' livery. Livery, in the sense of a distinctive costume, was not in those days a matter of "dressing-up." It was common in the higher grades of life. Every baron and civil dignitary had a livery for his dependents, and when these consisted of armed retainers it amounted to a uniform. The practice indeed ran to such excess that laws had to be introduced to limit its range to personal attendants. The church also had its livery, but not of a secular kind. It was



The year of our lord. m. cccc. lxxvii.
 At the going away the day of our lord
 lord having Harry the. vii. in the fourth
 These accounts were given on to the order
 of burgesses of London the vii. year of his
 reign in the time of Henry Clifton mayor



PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH, WIFE OF EDWARD IV AND MEMBER OF
THE SKINNERS' FRATERNITY OF OUR LADY'S ASSUMPTION

in the form of robes or gowns with hoods worn by the different orders of monks, and this was the pattern adopted for the livery of the Guilds.

Guild Liveries are first mentioned in the middle of the fourteenth century, when their appearance was certainly distinctive. The gowns were particoloured, in bright hues, until the time of the Reformation when they became more subdued; the hoods are thus described: they "were worn, the roundlets upon their heads, the skirts to hang behind on their necks to keep them warm, the tippet to lie on their shoulders or to wind about their necks." They were originally in colours like the gowns, "as red and blue, or red and purple, murrey, or as it pleased their masters and wardens to appoint."

A class distinction was made between those who might wear the gown and hood, and those who might only wear the hood, and thus began the division of the Guilds into those "on the livery" and those not. The liveries were worn on all state and ceremonial occasions, and it seems that their original hues are still kept up in the form of combinations adopted by the several Guilds as their "colours."

The same is the case with their religious denominations. The Guilds which began as Fraternities embodied the name of their saints in their titles, and these titles survived after the transformation of the religious into trade Guilds, and have never been abolished. Thus the Drapers' Company is still, in a formal way, described as the "Brethren and Sisters of the Guild or Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Mistery of Drapers of the City of London." The Grocers were a Fraternity of St. Anthony; the Taylors of St. John the Baptist; the Goldsmiths of St. Dunstan, patron saint of metal-workers; the Skinners and Salters of Corpus Christi, and the Saddlers of St. Martin. There is a complete record extant of the agreement made by the Saddlers with the canons of St. Martin le Grand at the end of the twelfth century, detailing the benefits on either side, which probably represents the common form in such proceedings. Quite a large number of Companies have secondary titles derived in this way from the Fraternities, and a few have adopted the name of some saint on mere traditional grounds, like St. Luke of the Painters and St. Lawrence of the Ironmongers and the Girdlers. Up to the time of the Tudors the religious associations were fully mentioned in the charters or licences issued to the guilds, and the "trade or mistery" was kept in the background, but after the Reformation the industries took first place.

The heads of the Fraternities were once known as Aldermen, a Saxon title which bears no relation to its later civic use. They were assisted by four Echevins, later called Wardens. It was the duty of the latter to summon the Guild to meet for masses or to attend funerals. Both of these ceremonies were followed, in the Saxon manner, by feasting, which brings us to the second integral function of guild life, the encouragement of social fellowship and hospitality.

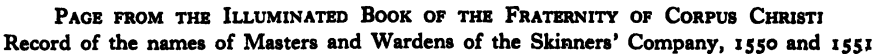
In their original form the feasts were of necessity simple and composed of viands contributed by the members. As time went on and funds improved they grew in importance. What they have finally become we see in the pleasant entertainments for which the Companies are famous to-day. The dinners were arranged for fixed occasions, such as the election of the Guild's officers, which took place as a rule on the Guild's saint day, and were preceded by a service to which the members marched in solemn procession in their livery. This custom has also survived in many cases.

Before the provision of proper meeting places for the feasts and for business purposes, the guildsmen had to use their own homes or the religious house to which they belonged. The necessity for something more commodious, and the gradual acquisition of funds, led to their seeking permanent premises, and thus began the erection of the beautiful Halls owned by many of the Companies. The original Halls were nearly all destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666, and have been re-built, often more than once, on the same or on different sites.

Some consisted of noblemen's houses, vacated during the change-over from feudal manors to citizen's wards; some were presented or bequeathed by wealthy members. To take one instance, the Drapers' Company, which had a Hall in St. Swithin's Lane in the fourteenth century, was allowed to acquire from the Crown in Henry VIII's reign the mansion of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, after his attainder and execution.

The Hall of the Merchant Taylors has (or one must now say *had*) the distinction of being the oldest in existence. It was a mansion acquired in 1331 by a member who was pavilion-maker to the King. Although damaged by the Great Fire it was not destroyed, but was quickly restored and in use. Besides being the oldest Hall it was the largest, and was in much request for important entertainments. A princely dinner was given there to James I, which cost the then enormous sum of more than a thousand pounds. It was used, before the Mansion House was built, for the Lord Mayor's banquets, and for meetings of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons. Grievous to relate, the banqueting room was destroyed by enemy action in a raid which took place on September 17, 1940.

Another historic Hall, which has shared the same fate, was that of the Mercers' Company. The Mercers, though not the oldest, take rank as the first of the City Companies in the order of precedence. Their history is a remarkable one. Their Guild formed an association in 1190 with the Hospital of St. Thomas of Acon, a brotherhood of Crusader Knights which had settled in the City as the Templars did in Fleet Street, and became the patrons of the Hospital and its church. The site of their Hall had formerly been the home of the father of Thomas à Becket, who was born there; and the Hospital had been built by the Archbishop's sister and her husband, Theobald Helles, in memory of his martyrdom. At the Reformation the monks of St. Thomas shared the general dissolution, and were



forced to surrender their rights to the King. But the Mercers, famous for great men like Richard Whittington and the Greshams, were fortunate in having one of the latter family as a friend at Court, and through him were allowed to acquire the Hospital and its church for a money-payment and certain obligations. Here they erected a very fine Hall, and included with it a chapel in place of the original church. No other Company had a chapel. These buildings were totally destroyed in an air-raid on May 11, 1941.

Before the advent of the flying bomb, most of the air-raid damage to the City occurred on the nights December 29-30, 1940, and May 10-11, 1941. In these raids fifteen Halls were destroyed, besides the two above-mentioned, and fifteen damaged; this out of a total of thirty-five Halls. Since then, there has been so much further destruction and damage by the flying bomb, that very few Halls remain untouched.

The religious and social sides of the Fraternities having been dealt with, there remains their third main object, namely, benevolence.

The Fraternities were not composed of one class, but included poor as well as rich; women and apprentices as well as aldermen and wardens. There was no system of state relief in existence for the unfortunate, and all duties of that nature had to be borne by the communities. Funds were set aside for the support of old and infirm brethren or their widows and orphans; help was provided for those who had suffered losses; loans were granted to young men of good character, and dowries to maidens.

Numerous bequests were made by wealthy citizens in the form of trusts for the erection of almshouses, and it is generally acknowledged that all through the ages these trusts and many others have been faithfully and honourably carried out by the Guilds, even when they were accompanied by rather burdensome conditions as to obits, dirges, and masses for the souls of the departed.

THE GROWTH OF THE TRADE-GUILDS

It was pointed out at the beginning that although the composition of many Fraternities was determined by the collocation of particular trades, the trade element was subordinated to the religious one. In course of time this order began to be reversed, and we see the rise of those institutions so dear to the heart of idealists—the craft guilds.

The change of character was accompanied, or caused, by a rise in prosperity. As the Guilds increased in wealth and power, they started to organise their trades, crafts and “misteries,” as they were called (cf. French *métier*), in such a way as to form complete monopolies, and prevent all competition from outsiders. The foreigners who had taken root in London, and thrived on imports from Holland and Italy, were particularly obnoxious to them,



THE CITY

Section of Ralph Aggas's Map of London, c. 1560

and were a frequent source of uproar. One famous body, the "German Steelyard," out of which grew the Hanseatic League, had been established in a sort of fortress by the Thames from an extremely early date, and fought for its existence until it was finally overwhelmed and destroyed. But interlopers from the country were no less resented, and the Aldermen of the Guilds, now become Masters, and their Wardens, began to draw up ordinances which gave them absolute power over their own house, with a right to institute searches and punish infringement. They also claimed to control the standard of workmanship, the wages of the journeymen, the number and treatment of apprentices, and to exercise jurisdiction over all domestic disputes. Outside them lay the powers of the Mayor's Court, to which they could appeal, and from which their authority was nominally derived. But they soon discovered the advantage of establishing their somewhat drastic rights on a higher basis, and began to petition the Crown for charters giving them definite legal powers over their trades, with complete internal autonomy, as well as power to acquire and possess landed property. The charters generally defined their rules of procedure in detail, as for instance in the election of their officers and the number of the Livery, and afforded a valuable shield against aggression.

ROYAL CHARTERS

There has been much discussion as to which were the earliest charters, but as all early charters have been annulled, amended, and renewed at various times, the discussion is really academic. As a matter of historical interest the Weavers and the Saddlers appear to have had the earliest charters that are known, in the reign of Henry I. During the reign of Henry II, the Bakers are found to be paying a composition fee of £6 a year to the Crown in lieu of taxes on their produce, which implies some kind of recognition, and the much-quoted case of the eighteen "adulterine" Guilds occurs. These Guilds were fined for the offence of carrying on an illegal association without having obtained a licence. They had seemingly taken advantage of the troublous times following the death of the Conqueror and during the reign of Stephen. Only four of these Guilds are recognisable as trade guilds, but they are amongst the very leading ones in later times—Goldsmiths, Pepperers (Grocers), Butchers, and Cloth-finishers.

The Weavers' charter mentioned above, and granted about 1130, was a cause of widespread discontent, and occasioned much envy. It seems to have put the Guild on a level with the barons and religious houses which possessed sokes in London, and gave them a collective lordship over their trade. Nevertheless it was confirmed by Henry II in return for a yearly payment of two gold marks, and placed them in a very strong position. They must have been a wealthy corporation for the time, but were weakened in the end by the competition of free weaving, and only recovered their position with the introduction of silk under the Tudors.

For a century or more the history of the trade guilds is confusing, but after the accession of Edward II and during the reign of Edward III (1307-1377), when the policy of encouraging home industries was fully recognised, the granting of Royal Charters became frequent. By 1500, twenty-five guilds were thus formally equipped with corporate rights and powers of jurisdiction. Eleven of these, to whom were later added the Clothworkers, had the peculiar privilege of calling themselves The Great Companies, and of exercising special electoral powers. The City authorities viewed these powers with disapproval, and took advantage of an Act of Henry V to call in all the charters for inspection and amendment. Some they were unable to touch, for the richer companies which could afford Royal Charters had paid a high price for them to the Crown. Over all the others the Mayor claimed authority, and some of the smaller ones disappeared.

A typical case of the methods adopted by the Guilds to procure a charter is afforded by a record of the Pewterers. In 1432 they paid a clerk of Chancery 5s. to assist in a search "for statutes and other things to the intent to labour to the Parliament for a charter for the craft to have search through England." The outbreak of civil war temporarily checked their efforts, but



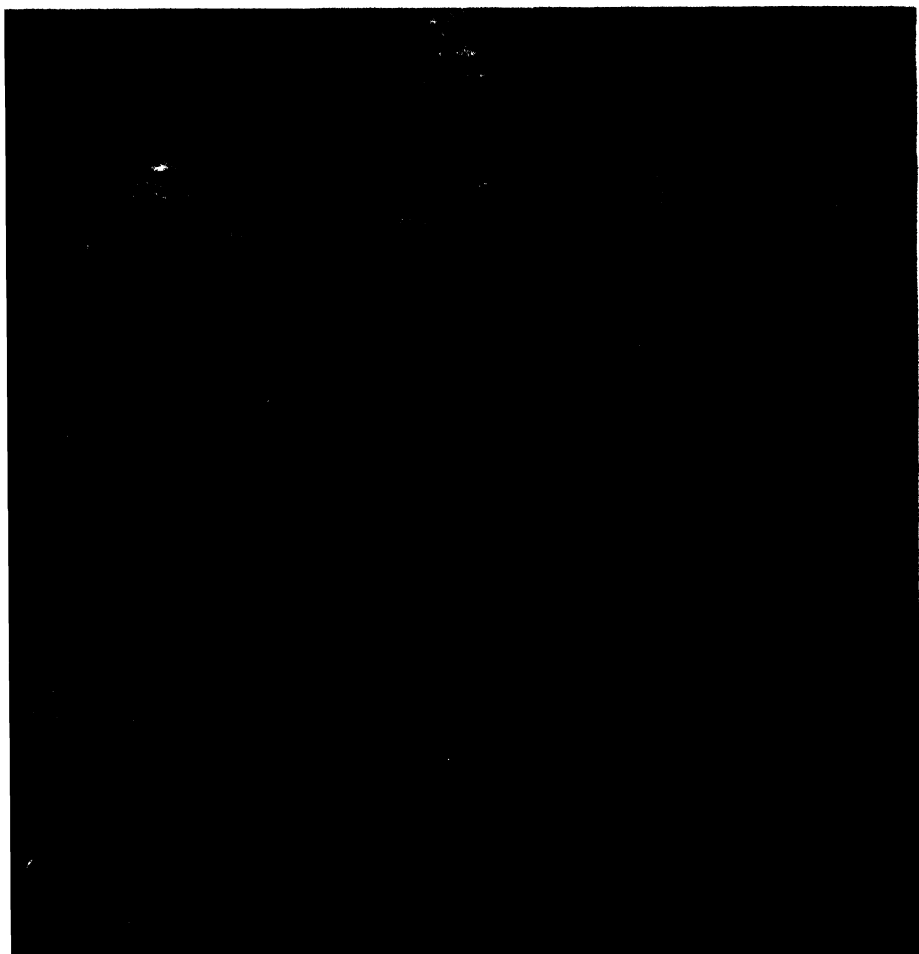
COATS OF ARMS OF THE TWELVE GREAT COMPANIES IN 1667
Engraving by Wenceslaus Hollar

under Edward IV a Bill was prepared for Parliament, the cost of which amounted to 10s. 8d. "A deputation entrusted with 8d. to bestow in drinks" went to Cutlers' Hall to ask the advice of the officials there, and another person of experience was interviewed at the *Mitre* in Cheap at a cost of 16d. in bread and wine. The Pewterers seem to have been advised that incorporation was a costly matter, and that they had better increase their finances before attempting it. Another ten years had to elapse before their final and successful effort. In 1467 a sum of £80 which had been accumulated was placed in the hands of one of the Wardens "for purchasing of our lyvelihood." In 1471 and 1472 sums of £7 4s. and £2 3s. 4d. are entered as legal expenses, and in 1473 a final sum of £41 18s. 8d. was raised by special levy on the householders of the craft, thirty-nine of whom contributed amounts varying from 2s. to £3.

"As soon as the charter was granted the new corporation proceeded to equip itself with a seal, which cost 10s. 5d. for silver and 6s. 8d. for graving, with a great book with two clasps, and a coffin for the corporation to lie in, and several copies of the charter in English. These last were for the purpose of enforcing the rights of search which they had now acquired over country pewterers and over pewter sold at fairs, which proved a profitable source of income. The searches covered the greater part of England, and during the following year they brought in over £20. Thirty-two country pewterers, braziers, and bell founders had been induced to enrol themselves, and no doubt much defective metal had been seized."

The Pewterers' next effort was to build a Hall, and the double prestige thus acquired produced instant fruit in gifts and bequests for glass windows, furniture, linen, and plate, "a fair banner" with the arms of the craft for pageants, and a gorgeous cloth of gold to use as a pall at the funeral of members.

In mentioning the Pewterers' arms, it may not be out of place here to say that most, if not all, of the Companies have received grants of arms including the use of supporters which have generally been reserved for the higher ranks of the peerage. The Drapers' grant of arms, which followed the gift of their charter of incorporation by Henry VI in 1439, is a beautiful specimen of illuminated work, in which not only the arms are emblazoned, but in the floriated initial is a representation in gold of the Virgin being crowned by God the Father with the three Imperial Crowns which form part of the shield. The grant states, in old French, that "I Garter King of Arms . . . have devised a coat of arms under the form of a blazon to remain to the said honourable Mistery as a perpetual memorial. That is to say, in honour of the very glorious Virgin and Mother Mary who is in the shadow of the sun and yet shines with all clearness and purity, I have devised" etc. Owing to religious changes the Company found it advisable to apply for new grants of arms to Elizabeth and to James I, in which the mention of the Blessed Virgin was suppressed.



PORTION OF A FUNERAL PALL WITH THE COMPANY'S ARMS, 1662

By courtesy of the Master and Wardens of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers

THE GREAT AGE

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are often referred to as the great period of guild prosperity, when they not only perfected their internal organisation, but began to exercise a dominant part in the City politics. Class differences had not made a final cleavage between rich masters and poor journeymen. The good apprentice could still entertain hopes of marrying his master's daughter. Readers of William Morris's *Dream of John Ball* will remember the picture of those sturdy open-hearted craftsmen, who lived the almost perfect communal life, and who joined the Kentish rebels with their long-bows in their heroic defiance of feudal tyranny. Perhaps most of us harbour a romantic impression of this period as the golden age of labour, when, "Everybody who made anything made a work of art as well as a useful piece of goods, and it gave him pleasure to make it." How far this was literally or universally true is difficult to say. That there was another side to the picture is shown by the frequent disputes and disorders which disturbed the peace of the City; whilst the ideal existence of the craftsman must have been qualified by the drastic regulations and penalties to which he was subject in his own circle.

The close monopolies which the Guilds tried to enforce, and which it was their constant ambition to have ratified by charter, produced much overlapping of kindred interests, especially where several Guilds were engaged in branches of the same industry. Until this superfluity of Guilds was reduced by extinction or amalgamation the quarrels between Guild and Guild increased. The history of the Leathersellers furnishes a case in point. Throughout the fifteenth century they waged constant war over the question of search with the Glovers, the Pursers, the Whittawyers (Curriers) and the Pouch-makers. In 1498 the Pursers and Glovers petitioned the Corporation that they might be united, on the ground that "both crafts were sore decayed in number of persons and in substance of goods," and four years later the double guild joined the Leathersellers. The Pouch-makers followed their example, and so the Leathersellers became supreme.

In the same way the guild of Armourers absorbed the rival trades of Bladesmiths and Brasiers; the Spurriers joined the Blacksmiths; the Hatters came under the control of the Haberdashers; Pinners and Wiresellers became subordinate members of the Girdlers. The case of the Clothworkers is especially noteworthy, as by their union with the Fullers and Shearmen they became strong enough to claim a place among the twelve Great Companies. The Fullers and Shearmen had managed to obtain separate grants of incorporation, in spite of strong opposition from the Drapers and Taylors. But they were weak bodies, and found their wealthier members continually drawn away to the more attractive ranks of the Drapers. Hence their union with the Clothworkers in 1528. In this way many of the crafts which had fought for separate existence (there were a hundred and eleven

of them in 1423) disappeared or became merged in more powerful bodies. In the meantime civil strife and the conflict of King and barons had reacted on London, where both sides tried to enlist the help of the citizens. Hostile parties were soon formed under reactionary or revolutionary Aldermen, and led to serious outbreaks of mob law. The orderly life of the Fraternities lapsed into an anarchy of the Guilds, most of whom under their new merchant leaders were busily fishing in troubled waters. In 1267, "when the embers of the recent civil war were still smouldering," an armed conflict took place in the streets of London between members of the Goldsmiths' craft and those of the Taylors. Clothworkers and Cordwainers joined in the fray. More than five hundred craftsmen are said to have been engaged, and many were slain or wounded. Geoffrey de Beverley, a clothworker, and twelve others who had taken part on either side, were hanged. The main significance of this incident lies in the fact that it illustrates the change which was taking place in city politics. For a century the struggle had been one between the Aldermen of the guilds and outsiders, foreigners and men from the country who had been released from serfdom and were flocking into the towns to earn their living as workmen; now it was between two opposing sets of guilds, those who lived by craft and those who lived by merchandise.

Occasionally a question of precedence was the basis of dispute between rival guilds. Such was the case of a conflict between the Skinners and the Fishmongers in 1340, when the claim to priority was fought out with arms in Cheapside. There was much bloodshed on both sides, and the civic authorities were compelled to intervene. On this occasion also the ring-leaders were hanged; but the Fishmongers seem to have established their claim to the fourth place in the list, whilst the Skinners were subsequently ousted still further by the Goldsmiths, and were relegated to the sixth or seventh.

The Skinners appear at this time to have been a singularly truculent body. After being worsted by the Goldsmiths they launched an attack on the Merchant Taylors. In this case, however, a more conciliatory attitude was adopted, and the Lord Mayor was called in to arbitrate on the claims. He gave a typical arbitrator's judgment in favour of both parties, to the effect that each should have precedence on alternate years (unless the Mayor should happen to be a member of either of them in any particular year, when the precedence fell to that one), and that they should become reconciled and dine with each other in their respective Halls alternately on their Saints' days, the Taylors with the Skinners on the vigil of Corpus Christi, and the Skinners with the Taylors on the Feast of St. John the Baptist. This custom has been loyally observed to the present day, and the Companies have remained the best of friends, recalling the memory of their past differences in one of the frescoes at the Royal Exchange, which was paid for out of their joint funds.



PLAN OF THE HALL AND BUILDINGS OF THE FISHMONGERS' COMPANY c. 1513
Engraving reproduced in William Herbert's *Twelve Great Livery Companies of London*, 1837

The most serious of these mediaeval disputes, which kept the city in a state of turmoil for several years during the reign of Richard II, arose out of the monopolies which had been granted to certain of the victualling trades, notably the Fishmongers, who were accused by a powerful section of the mercantile guilds of having raised the prices of food. Fish was in those days a vital necessity of diet, to the poor at all times, and to the better classes in Lent. The agitation against the Victuallers was led by John of Northampton, a prominent member of the Drapers' Company, who afterwards made history as the first reforming Mayor. He was supported by the Mercers, Taylors and Goldsmiths, as well as by the Saddlers, Haberdashers, Cordwainers, and other Minor Guilds.

What made this quarrel particularly remarkable was that it assumed a religious aspect, and had violent repercussions in the outer world. Northampton was a friend of John of Gaunt, the King's uncle, and Gaunt was

engaged in protecting Wyclif from his accusers. Wyclif came to London to answer the charges against him in St. Paul's, and was accompanied by Gaunt and Earl Percy, the Marshal. Northampton's party accompanied them and during the proceedings was attacked by the Victuallers. There was a violent riot, in the course of which the Marshal's and Lancaster's house were assaulted, and Gaunt himself forced to fly for his life.

The citizens on this occasion were divided into parties by a complicated tangle of antipathies, in which the question of food prices was mixed up with the rival claims of Wyclif and orthodoxy. The King and Parliament took opposite sides in the dispute, corporation authority was at a standstill, and the situation strongly resembled the still more desperate factions which were tearing the industrial cities of the Continent to pieces. Finally after a decade of disorder the dispute wore itself out, leaving the Victuallers on the whole victorious.

The story does not end there. Gaunt took his revenge by moving the Parliament of 1378 to Gloucester, and thereby depriving the Victuallers of much valuable custom. In 1379 the Commons passed the notorious Poll Tax, which infuriated the nation and was largely responsible for bringing about the Peasants' Revolt under Wat Tyler. The march of the rebels to Blackheath, their admission to the City by members of the Fishmongers Company, and the stabbing of their leader by Walworth, which quelled the rising, are matters of English history. They were followed by the mayoralty of Northampton, the Draper, whose sweeping reforms, made with the best intentions, had the usual effect of displeasing everybody. A reaction led to Northampton's arrest and incarceration at Tintagel. He only escaped execution through the Queen's help. Nicholas Brember, a Fishmonger, who had been active in the late affairs, succeeded him as Mayor, and made, to his credit, several useful changes in the administration; but he, in his turn, fell a victim to the rancour of the times and was executed for "treason" in 1388, although he had been a gallant soldier.

But what of the craftsman's "golden age"? Morris, whom we have quoted, and whose knowledge of the period was in his own time unequalled, regarded the end of the fourteenth century as the beginning of the decline of the Guilds. During its progress, he says, the craftsman "lived, however roughly, yet at least far easier than his successor does now. He worked for no master save the public, he made his wares from beginning to end himself, and sold them himself to the man who was going to use them. This was the case at least with nearly all, if not all, the goods made in England. Some of the rarer goods, such as silk cloth, did come into the chaffering market, which had to be the case all the more for this, that the materials of any country were chiefly wrought into goods close to their birthplace. But even in the case of these rarer goods they were made primarily for home consumption, and only the overplus came into the hands of the merchant, concerning which latter you must remember that he was

not a mere gambler in the haphazard of supply and demand as he is to-day, but an indispensable distributor of goods. He was paid for his trouble in bringing goods from a place where there was more than was needed of them to a country where there was not enough, and that was all. The laws against forestallers and regratters give an idea of how this matter of commerce was looked on in the Middle Ages, as commerce, *i.e.*, not profitmongering. A forestaller was a man who bought up produce to hold it for a rise; a regratter, a man who bought and sold in the same market or within five miles of it; . . it was the view of the benighted people of the Middle Ages that a man who bought, say, a hundredweight of cheese for twopence a pound at nine in the morning, and sold it at eleven for threepence, was not a specially useful citizen!"

As for the craftsman, "he was no priest-ridden, down-trodden savage, but a thoughtful and vigorous man, and in some sense at least free. He worked, not for the profit of a master, but for his own livelihood, which he did not find it difficult to earn; so that he had a good deal of leisure, and being master of his time, his tools, and his material, was not bound to turn out his work shabbily, but could amuse himself by giving it an artistic finish."

This panegyric must be taken as applying to the early rather than to the late fourteenth century and its successor, during which, as has been said, the Livery Guilds were tending to become oligarchic bodies, ruled by Masters who were generally Aldermen with mercantile ambitions, and who were in process of amassing considerable fortunes for themselves. The influx of work-seekers from the country had given rise to the class of journeymen, between the masters and the apprentices, men whose wages were low, and who had no effective representation beyond what was conferred on them by the Wardens who regulated their lives. That discontent was rife is shown by the many cases in which journeymen broke away and started guilds of their own. Such small bodies, without corporate funds, stood small chance of success, and, as has been shown, they mostly suffered extermination or were re-absorbed into the larger corporations.



LIVERYMEN IN THE REIGN OF JAMES I

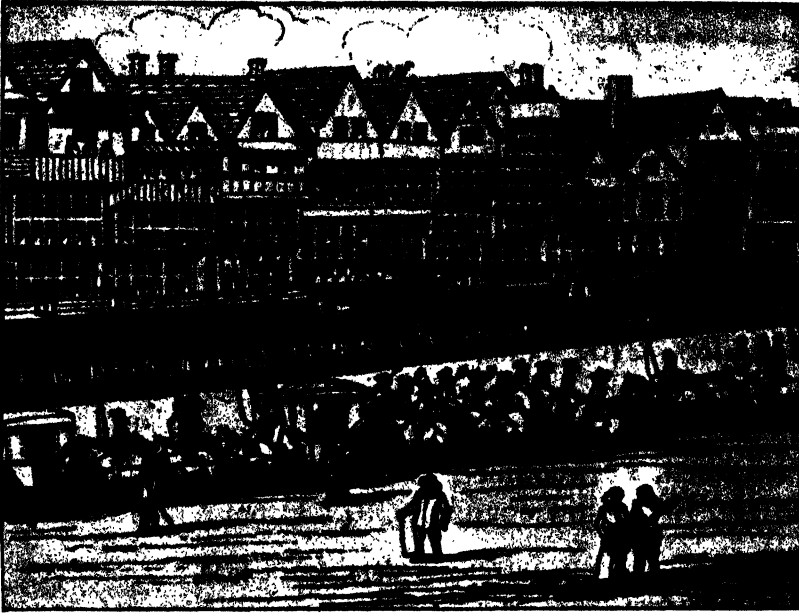
WEALTH AND PAGEANTRY OF THE GUILDS

One cannot help being struck, when studying the negotiations of the Guilds over the acquirement of royal charters and the like, at the great sums of money which they were able to find. Even in Plantagenet days money seems to have been plentiful, and on the principle of *l'appetit vient en magedant*, as one dynasty succeeded another the inroads on the Companies' coffers grew steadily larger. What was sufficient for Henry VI or Edward IV was too little for the Tudors. The Council of Edward VI showed marked signs of rapacity in its dealings over the property which had been seized at the Reformation; and Elizabeth was not behindhand in her requirements to meet the threat of the Armada. In fact large contributions were exacted for nearly all military campaigns from Edward I's Scotch War down to modern times. But the most unscrupulous plunderers of the City were the Stuart Kings, whose enactments had to be modified by later rulers from Cromwell down to the Georges. One of James I's devices was to call in all the Companies' Charters for renewal, not because they needed renewal, but because of the fees to be snatched from it.

A particularly obnoxious form of extortion, which grew to its climax in the reign of Elizabeth, was the granting of patents to private speculators for farming the Companies' taxes, in return for a purchase payment or services. It was a convenient method of gratifying Court favourites. One Edward Darcy, who obtained a right to stamp and pass all skins in return for fees, roused the Leathersellers to rebellion, and four of their Wardens were sent to prison after a riot in which the Mayor suffered assault. Members of the Grocers' Company were committed for resisting a starch monopoly bestowed on two courtiers to enable them to pay their debts. There were patents for controlling the importation of steel, bottles, and stone-ware, and the exportation of beer, horns, woollen rags, and tin. The manufacture of glass, paper, salt and alum; the mining of gold, silver, copper and other minerals; the printing of books and supply of "unlawful games" were all in the hands of patentee monopolists. When the list of these grants was read out in Parliament a member ironically wondered that bread was not included.

The Crown did not even treat its own puppets fairly, but sold the same patent more than once. The whole system became a scandal. Many commodities had doubled in price, and finally public indignation grew to such a pitch that the Queen was forced to make a graceful capitulation in order to save her prerogative, "the chiefest flower of her garden and the principal pearl of her crown and diadem." But she claimed a compensation of £4,000 from the Leathersellers for the revocation of Darcy's patent, which may or may not have been paid.

Notwithstanding all the exactions, and the tendency to regard the City Companies as a milch-cow which could be depended on to produce funds



LORD MAYOR'S PROCESSION, NOVEMBER 16TH, 1639
Engraving after Le Serre illustrating the passage through Cheapside of Mary de Medicis
accompanied by Charles I and his Court

for every emergency, it is remarkable that the Companies maintained a constant loyalty, and were not as a rule grudging in their contributions; though they were sometimes reduced to selling their plate, or borrowing money to meet the demands on them, as for the ransom of Richard Coeur de Lion. They only protested occasionally, as the Drapers did when called upon to finance the voyage of Sebastian Cabot. In general they behaved very handsomely. Besides finding money for government purposes, they voluntarily spent large sums on pageantry in honour of a royal visit to the City, or when the Companies went in their state barges to Westminster.

The Lord Mayor's Show is the last survival of innumerable processions in which giants, Morris dancers, and men in armour took part. Some of the larger Companies adopted a special form of display, and preserved it for several centuries. Such was the famous model ship of the Fishmongers, first constructed to welcome back Edward I from his Scottish campaign and reproduced on many subsequent occasions. At the coronation of Richard II the Goldsmiths erected a turreted castle from which wine flowed for the refreshment of the crowd, and leaves of gold were blown upon the King, whilst an angel descended and presented him with a crown. The

Grocers had an island of spice trees which figured in the Lord Mayor's processions of the seventeenth century; but perhaps the most attractive of all these trophies was the "Maiden's Chariot" of the Mercers, which made its first appearance at a very early date, and was gradually more and more elaborated. "The central figure of this," it is said, "was a beautiful young gentlewoman of good parentage, religious education, and unblemished character. Her dress was of white satin with a fringe of gold; on her dishevelled hair was placed a coronet of gold richly set with emeralds, diamonds, and sapphires, and from her shoulders hung a robe of crimson velvet. In one hand she held a sceptre, in the other a shield with the Mercers' arms.

"Surrounding the virgin in her Roman Chariot of embossed silver, adorned with angels and cherubim, sat Vigilance, Wisdom, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, Faith, Hope, and Charity, with the Nine Muses, while Fame blew her trumpet on a golden canopy above. Eight pages of honour in cloth of silver walked on foot, and Triumph served as Charioteer."

This pageant was twenty-two feet high, and was drawn by nine horses, three abreast, with allegorical riders, attended by grooms and Roman licitors. In front of the procession was a body of savages, or "green men," throwing fireworks. At the Lord Mayor's banquet the maiden with her retinue, dined in state at a separate table.

Towards the latter end of the sixteenth century the pageants tended to become more and more ambitious, and live animals were introduced into the shows; but after the Reformation a comic and somewhat vulgar element began to creep in, and the mediaeval glory departed. Nevertheless the river pageants with the rich barges of the Companies continued to make a fine display down to the year 1856.

The Mercers Company had been especially prominent for their wealth for more than a century when Richard Whittington, the hero of nursery literature and the most distinguished figure in the whole of City history, entertained Henry V and his French Queen at the Mayoralty. The Queen having made some comment on the extravagance of cedarwood fires, the Mayor with a magnificent gesture at once proposed to feed them with something still costlier, and threw on the flames the whole of the King's bonds for £60,000! Such, at least, is the legend. Sir Thomas Gresham, another famous Mercer, founded the Royal Exchange and thereby at one stroke made London instead of Amsterdam the commercial centre of the world.

In addition to their domestic prosperity, the Mercers and other trading Companies had been quick to take advantage of the prospects offered by foreign trade, and fitted out fleets of merchantmen to take the place of the alien traders whose activities were a standing grievance, and who indeed had been at the bottom of much of the turbulence and rioting which upset the peace of the city in the previous centuries. Among the first, as well as

the most famous of these enterprises were the Merchant Adventurers, called also the "Guild or Fraternity of St. Thomas à Becket," a branch of the Mercers' Company which received special incorporation from Edward IV. It traded all over Holland and Germany with great success, and was received with acclamation in the Dutch cities which it helped to enrich. Although the Adventurers later broke away from the Mercers, they kept up friendly intercourse, and shared the Mercers' Hall until its destruction in the Great Fire of 1666. They still survive as a relic of history at Bristol, where they exist much in the fashion of a modern City Company.

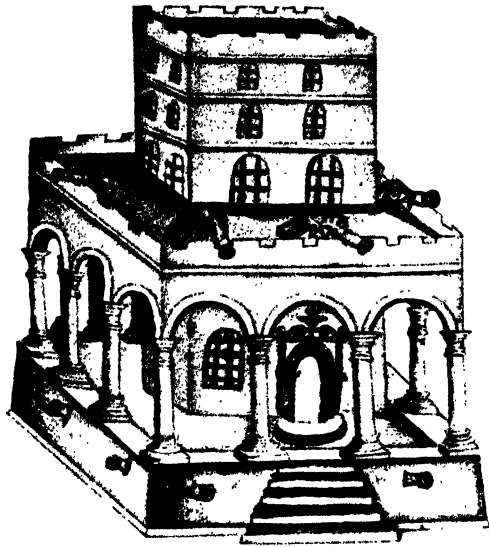
Other trading Companies which originated amongst the London Guilds were the Muscovite Company dealing with Russia; the Turkey Company, visiting the Levant; and the Royal African Company. There were also Merchants of Spain, the French Merchants of Virginia, the South Sea Company, and Companies that traded with Guinea and the Canaries. Finally there were the Hudson's Bay Company, for importing furs from Canada, and the East India Company, the greatest of all such enterprises, which brought England her Indian Empire.



'THE TRIUMPH OF NEPTUNE'

A decorated car in a sixteenth century Lord Mayor's Procession
Engraving by Jackson after Fairholt from Knight's *London*

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THE PLANTATION OF ULSTER

Proposed fortification at Londonderry

Illustration from *A Survey of Irish Plantation* by Sir Thomas Phillips, 1662

THE ULSTER AND VIRGINIA PLANTATIONS

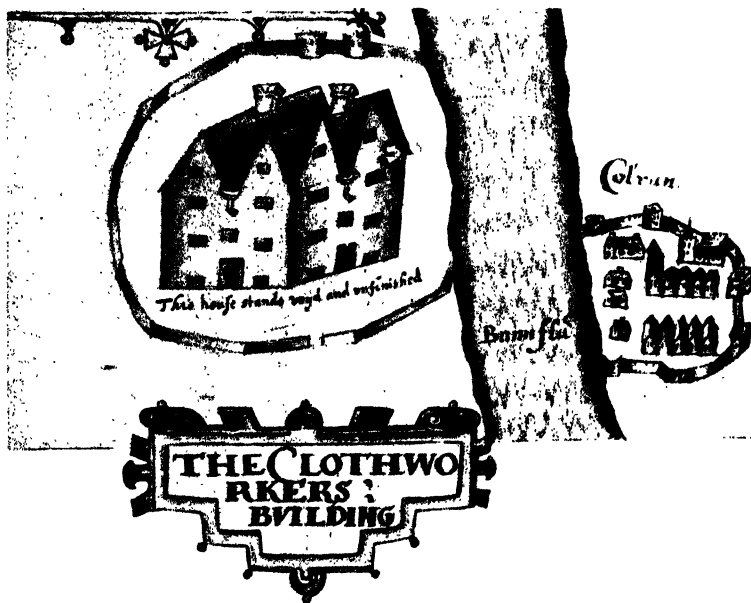
An account may here be given of two other very remarkable undertakings in which the City Companies played a prominent part, undertakings which might in good hands have proved locally as valuable in their way as that of the East India Company, but which to-day make somewhat lamentable reading.

The first was the notorious "Plantation of Ulster," under the auspices of James I. In the previous reign an attempt had been made to colonise the province of Munster, which proved a failure owing to the manner in which the distribution of land was conducted. In 1608 an opportunity was found for the plantation of Ulster by the confiscation of lands belonging to the rebel Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell. On this occasion it was proposed to plant the colony with a number of small proprietors, chiefly of English and Scotch blood. The native Irish were to be removed and placed under control of what were called "Servitors," old soldiers who had served in the Irish wars, or men who had been employed in Civil Service in Ireland.

The territory in question consisted of 3,798,000 acres in the six counties of Armagh, Tyrone, Coleraine, Donegal, Fermanagh and Cavan. The settlers were to receive grants of from 1,000 to 2,000 acres each on nominal

terms; they were to engage to reside on the property for five years, to introduce Scotch or English tenants, but not to re-admit any Irish. They had to build castles for defence and churches, and were to have special facilities for importing arms, victuals, and building materials. However promising the scheme may have looked on paper, it failed at first to attract applicants for the land, and in 1609 it was decided to make an effort to interest the City Companies in the venture. A circular was prepared in which the country was declared to be "well watered and wooded, suitable for breeding cattle, and for the cultivation of hemp, flax, and madder. Iron was to be found in the hills, and pearls in the rivers. It had excellent harbours. It was well-stocked with 'red deare, foxes, conye, martin, squirrel and all fowl.' In short it contained such abundance of provisions that, besides supplying the Plantation, it would assist towards the relief of the London poor." In London, it stated, the City was so over-crowded that one tradesman could scarcely live by another, and the removal of the surplus population would reduce the liability to infectious diseases and the plague.

A considerable amount of pressure was exerted to induce the Companies to interest themselves in the venture, and the Corporation decided to send a deputation of responsible citizens to survey the property. The instructions to the Deputy in charge as to how this deputation should be treated are on



THE PLANTATION OF ULSTER: THE CLOTHWORKERS' BUILDING
Illustration from *A Survey of Irish Plantation* by Sir Thomas Phillips, 1662

record. They are an instance of the very finest type of window-dressing, and were successful enough to produce a favourable report. The Common Council thereupon proposed to authorise the formation of a Company and the raising of £15,000 from the City Companies. The Privy Council increased this to £20,000, and the terms on which the lands were to be colonised were drawn up. It cannot be said that the Companies made a willing response, especially as the sum required was presently raised to £52,500. The assessments made on them were raised with great difficulty and only after some Wardens had been committed to prison for default. Eventually in 1613 all the land granted to what was known as the Irish Society (a Committee of the City Corporation), with the exception of the towns of Derry and Coleraine and some 700 acres reserved for the Society, had been taken up and distributed amongst the twelve Major Companies, who managed to associate in their undertaking such Minor Companies as were willing to join. The Drapers took the Tallow Chandlers into their venture; each of the other Companies, with the exception of the Grocers and Merchant Taylors, had at least three sub-sharers; the Vintners had eight.

The subsequent history of the Plantation consists mainly of a record of unfulfilled engagements, dishonest or incompetent administrators, trouble with the Irish, and misbehaviour of the settlers introduced. It was many years before any semblance of profit was obtained from the undertaking, and just as the Companies had begun to reap some reward from their labours as landlords the rebellion of 1641 undid much of their work. But the settlement proved permanent, and in the end, by the operation of the Irish Land Purchase Acts in the nineteenth century, the Companies were mostly able to dispose of their holdings on fairly satisfactory terms. Traces of their occupation are still to be found in the case of local names, including that of Derry, which in honour of the Irish Society was augmented into Londonderry. In the City itself the episode still finds commemoration in the relations maintained between the Major and Minor Companies which risked their fortunes together.

It was not long after the flotation of the Ulster Colony that a similar undertaking was started for Virginia. Once more the City was expected to provide the means, and once more emphasis was laid on the benefits to be derived from a transfer of the surplus population. Once more the venture was commended as a valuable source of profit. Emigrants were promised "meate, drink, and clothing, with an howse, orchard and garden for the meanest family, and possession of lands to them and their posterity." In spite of their previous experience, no less than fifty-six of the Livery Guilds became shareholders in the "Company of Adventurers and Planters of the City of London for the Colony of Virginia." The Drapers were specially active in promoting this scheme, and from time to time subscribed to send out vagrant boys and girls to be industrially employed. During 1609-10 no less than three expeditions were despatched with emigrants,



THE PLANTATION OF VIRGINIA : THE VILLAGE OF SECOTON
Water colour by John White, c. 1585-90

including women, but some of the ships were lost at sea, and others carried yellow fever and plague into the Colony which caused havoc among the earlier inhabitants. The character of the settlers was reported to be so bad that they were useless. The natives were hostile. The returns were negligible, and discipline had to be maintained by a Draconian code of laws which was only suitable for slaves or convicts. Fresh levies of capital had to be called for, in which the Companies in their corporate capacity do not seem to have shared, perhaps because they were fully occupied in raising their arrears on the Ulster venture. State lotteries were floated, and produced a fair sum which eased the straitened finances of the Colony, and consignments of tobacco brought it some gain. In the end however the Crown was forced to take over the Colony and revoke its charter, leaving the emigrants to carry on as a mere trading society.

THE CITY'S FIGHTING FORCES

It will have been observed from what has gone before that the citizens of London were not a peaceful body. They have a long record of strife, and, what is more creditable, of warlike prowess. Where, indeed, could a finer example be found than that of Sir John Hawkwood, a tailor's apprentice, who, being 'pressed' for service in the foreign wars of Edward III, earned distinction and the friendship of the Black Prince at Poitiers? After the peace between France and England, he enlisted a force of five thousand horse and fifteen hundred foot, to assist the Marquis of Montserrat against Galeazzo, Duke of Milan. Changing sides, as soldiers of fortune often did, he joined the party of the Visconti, and after a long and successful career was buried with honour at Florence, where his portrait on horseback is depicted in fresco by Paolo Uccello on the walls of the Duomo, with an inscription to "Johannes Acutus, Eques Britannicus."

The Train Bands of London have often been mentioned. They may have grown out of earlier defence forces which had existed since Norman days for the protection of the City, but reached their prime during the invasion scare in Elizabeth's reign, when they totalled some 6,000 men out of a national force of 120,000. They had the advantage of military training at the hands of the Honourable Artillery Company, the oldest regiment in Britain, which was formed out of city merchants who had served in Continental wars, and was originally known as the Guild or Fraternity of St. George. It received its first Charter from Henry VIII.

During the Civil War the City supported the Parliament against the King, and took part in actions like the Battle of Naseby, which it celebrated in typical fashion by a dinner. The relief of Gloucester by the London Train Bands marked a turning point in the fortunes of King Charles. For this exploit the Common Council, which had complained of royal exactions, raised a special fund of £500,000 from the Companies, and itself contributed an outlay of £10,000 a week.

At the Restoration the London Train Bands were exempted from the general disarmament, and despite their previous attitude Charles II visited the citizens with special favour. There may have been in this change of front some reaction to the gloom imposed on their festivities by the Puritans which inclined them to welcome a return to Royalty. One reads of sermons two hours long as a prelude to a feast in honour of Fairfax, the Lord President, in Grocers' Hall, when "no drinking of healths nor other uncivil concomitants" were permitted, "nor any other music but that of the drum and trumpet." The Train Bands made their name and went their way, not to be revived until in 1899 the necessities of the Boer War led to the formation of the famous C.I.V.

The City has also played its part at sea, and the Lord Mayor, as Admiral of the Port of London, ranks as an officer of flag rank, and is entitled to be



LOVING CUPS OF THE COMPANY OF PEWTERERS
Oil painting by an unknown artist c. 1802

piped on board His Majesty's ships. In Richard II's time the English waters were infested by a pirate named Mercer, who caused great havoc among our merchantmen. The Government was too feeble to deal with him; but a valiant Grocer, Sir John Philpot, whose name still exists in a City thoroughfare, raised a force of 1,000 watermen from London, paid them out of his own pocket, and equipped a fleet with which he sailed out and not only defeated the pirate but captured all his ships and some Spanish ones as well which had helped in the depredations. Next year, when the King needed ships for an expedition into France, the same Mayor redeemed the arms and armour of a thousand men which were in pawn, and handed over not only the fleet he had raised but all his captured prizes in addition. At the time of the Spanish Armada thirty ships, including ten belonging to the Merchant Adventurers of London, set forth to protect this country from invasion, all at the charge of the City of London.

London, it has been remarked, is a great recruiting ground for the Navy, and it is stated on good authority that nearly a fifth of the men who fought in Nelson's *Victory* at Trafalgar were Londoners born.

INDUSTRIAL CHANGES

The interesting features of Guild history, which began in the twelfth, may be said to have come to an end with the seventeenth, century. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though an important change was taking place in their character, the Guilds figure in no very memorable incidents; and their transformation was hardly perceptible. It coincided with, and was brought about by the industrial revolution which saw the rise of manufacturing cities all over England, particularly in the midlands and the north which were the principal centres for coal.

The Cutlers for instance were compelled to recognise a new centre, and to form an alliance with the Sheffield Company, which was, and still is, conducted on the lines of a London Livery Guild. This has a fine Hall, and the Master Cutler, always the head of one of the leading firms in the trade, gives an annual entertainment rivalling the Lord Mayor's banquet. The Sheffield feast is said to have arisen out of a gift of venison by the Lord of the Manor of Hallamshire, who gave the Cutlers permission to enter his park and take as many deer as they could kill and carry away in their own hands.

What happened to the Cutlers had an even more decisive effect upon most of the other Companies. The rise of mechanism sounded the death-knell of the handicrafts; but curiously enough the loss of their *raison d'être* found and left them at the very peak of their prosperity. The properties which they had acquired by purchase or bequest round London had increased out of all measure in value, and they could afford to dispense with the industries which had tended more and more to decline. In the end but few Companies could be said to retain any vestige of their ancient character; but the Fishmongers continue to manage the great distributing market at Billingsgate and have also important duties connected with freshwater, crab and lobster fisheries, and the Goldsmiths still exercise their right to the assaying and stamping of gold and silver articles at their Hall, whence the expression "hall-marked." But they no longer have this right as a monopoly. The Goldsmiths also still carry out the ceremony of what is called "the trial of the Pyx," or certification of the metal used in coinage at the Mint. They have done much in recent years to encourage the design and manufacture of modern gold and silver plate; they were responsible recently for the design of the famous Sword of Stalingrad presented by King George to that city. The Stationers for a time preserved their monopoly of copyright, but do so no longer. It is among the Minor Companies that we find most evidence of what is really a renewal of their old connections. Some of them have attracted to their Livery representatives of their calling. Others are promoting the interests of their trades by founding scholarships, supporting training schools, and generally doing what is possible to further technical education in their special lines. Thus, the



THE LORD MAYOR'S MANSION HOUSE
Coloured engraving by Fourdrinier after Wale, 1745
By courtesy of the Parker Gallery, London



LORD NELSON'S FUNERAL PROCESSION BY WATER FROM GREENWICH HOSPITAL TO WHITEHALL, JANUARY 8TH, 1806
Coloured engraving by J. Clark and H. Merke after Turner
By courtesy of the Parker Gallery, London

Spectacle-Makers have helped to produce qualified opticians by means of a system of examinations. The Carpenters, with their associated guilds, have initiated a Trades Training School in Great Titchfield Street, where instruction is given in the various building crafts. The Leathersellers have founded a Technical College; the Cooks encourage cookery classes; even the Farriers have started examinations and a system of national registration for the improvement of shoeing smiths, and the Plumbers for their own trade. The Saddlers still exercise a right of "search."

With the changeover from hand-made to mechanised manufacture the City Companies ceased to be Craft-Guilds, otherwise than nominally, and devoted themselves to other purposes for which they were well adapted. One of these purposes which had never been allowed to diminish was hospitality.

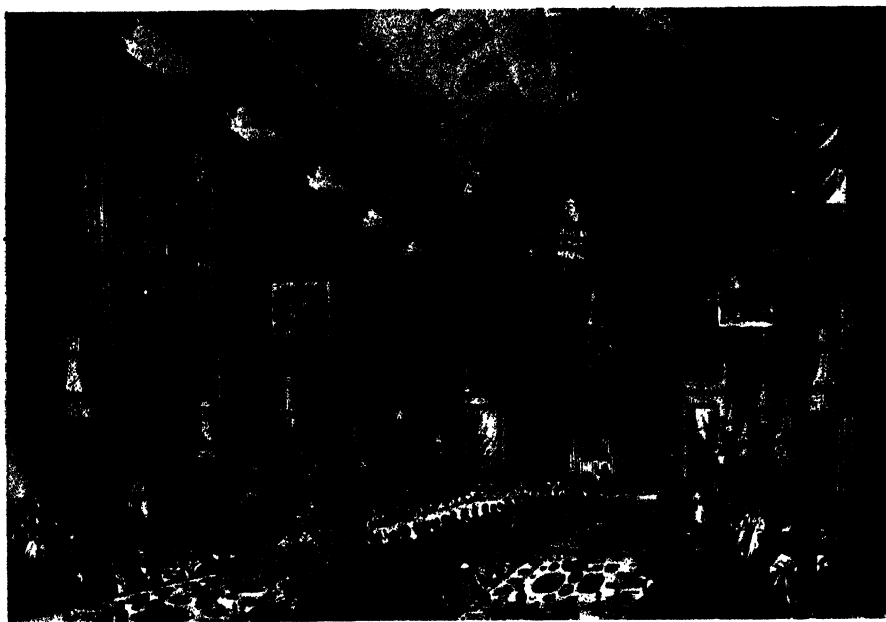
THE CITY COMPANIES' HOSPITALITY

To the world at large, which knows nothing of their long history, and hears little of their benefactions except on occasions when some national disaster gives rise to a Lord Mayor's Fund, the Companies are perhaps chiefly famous for their entertainments. The custom of dining together is among their earliest institutions, and is an echo of Saxon times.

As early as 1380 the Wardens of the Goldsmiths made a feast to which were invited "my very honourable Lady Isabel, daughter of the King, and her daughter the Countess of Oxford, the Lord Latimer, the Grand Master of St. John's, Clerkenwell, and the Mayor, with six other good guests which put the Wardens to great cost." By degrees the feasts began to rival in style and luxury those of the greatest magnates of the land. In time, before circumstances occurred to introduce some moderation in the expenditure, they considerably exceeded them.

The early accounts of these banquets read strangely to-day. The Brewers spent £38 on a notable feast in 1425, when 21 swans were provided at 3s. 9d. each, 2 geese at 8d., 40 capons at 6d., 40 conies at 3d., 48 partridges at 4d., 12 woodcocks at 4d., 12½ smaller birds at 6d. the dozen, 3 doz. plovers at 3/-, 18 dozen larks at 4d., and 6 dozen little birds at 1½d. a dozen. The Brewers at this time were at variance with Whittington, the Mayor, over a question of the quality of their beer, and attributed his persecution to the Mayor's jealousy of their swans and the luxury of their feasts.

An Elizabethan writer remarks, "At such times as the merchants do make their ordinary or voluntary feasts, it is a world to see what great provision is made of all manner of delicate meats from every quarter of the country, wherein besides that they are often comparable to the nobility of the land they will seldom regard anything that the butcher usually killeth, but reject the same as not worthy to come in place. In such cases also



A BANQUET IN THE EGYPTIAN HALL AT THE MANSION HOUSE, 1809
Coloured engraving by J. Bluck after Rowlandson and Pugin

jellies of all colours, mixed with a variety in the representation of flowers, herbs, trees, forms of beasts, fish, fowls, and fruits, and thereunto march-pane wrought with no small curiosity, tarts of divers hues, conserves of old fruits, foreign and homebred, suckets, codinacs, marmalade, sugar-bread, ginger-bread, florentines, venison of all sorts . . . Of the potato and such venerous roots . . . I speak not."

In 1516 the Drapers entertained a company of 78 distinguished guests, including the Mayor and Sheriffs. Some 200 diners sat down in all, with forty ladies in the ladies' chamber, and twenty maidens in the chequer chamber. The guests at the chief table and the ladies were served with brawn and mustard, capon boiled, swan roasted, pike, venison baked and roast ; jellies, pastry, quails, sturgeon, salmon, wafers and hippocras. For the Livery were provided four sirloins of beef "cut throughout the ox," six sheep and a calf. Forty gallons of curds were supplied by the milk-wife for the meal, which was accompanied by minstrels and players.

This being an election feast was followed by the ceremony of choosing the new Master and Wardens, which deserves mention because it included the custom which has been preserved ever since of offering "garlands." The garlands consisted of an open velvet cap ornamented with silver

badges, and their presentation was accompanied by a good deal of ceremony. In Evelyn's diary he mentions dining at the "Yronmongers' " Hall, where the four stewards chose their successors for the next year "with a solemn procession, garlands about their heads." Here is a detailed description of the proceedings as practised by the Ironmongers in 1565, when their rules prescribed "that the two Wardens at the dinner shall rise to go out, and then come in with garlands for the Master only in the chief Warden's hands, with the minstrels before them, and the bedell, and making their obeisance to the Master shall deliver him the same garland; and there shall remain till the Master hath assayed the garland upon the heads of such of the most worshipful as he shall think meet. And then the Master to receive it again and set it on his own head . . . and the Wardens to come in again with the bedell and minstrels before them, either of them having his garland upon his head, and one to bear a cup before the chief Warden, and to go once about the house, and after obeisance made the chief Warden to take the cup and deliver it to the old Master, and then the old Master to take the garland off his own head and put it on the new Master's head. And then the old Master to take the cup and drink to the new Master," and so on.

The Skinners were said to use *caps of maintenance*, instead of the usual pattern of garland, and to go through the same ceremonies as above, with the pretence of trying the caps on various heads, until by a coincidence they are found to fit the heads they were meant for.

When the Drapers' dinner just described, and the garland rites and toast-drinking were over, there was a further election of "master-bachelors" from the Yeomen, who then sat down to spiced bread, pears, and filberts, wine and ale; whilst the old Wardens, who had probably been too busy to do justice to the dinner, regaled themselves on "swan's puddings, a neck of mutton in pike broth, two shoulders of mutton roast, four conies, eight chickens, six pigeons, and cold meat plenty."

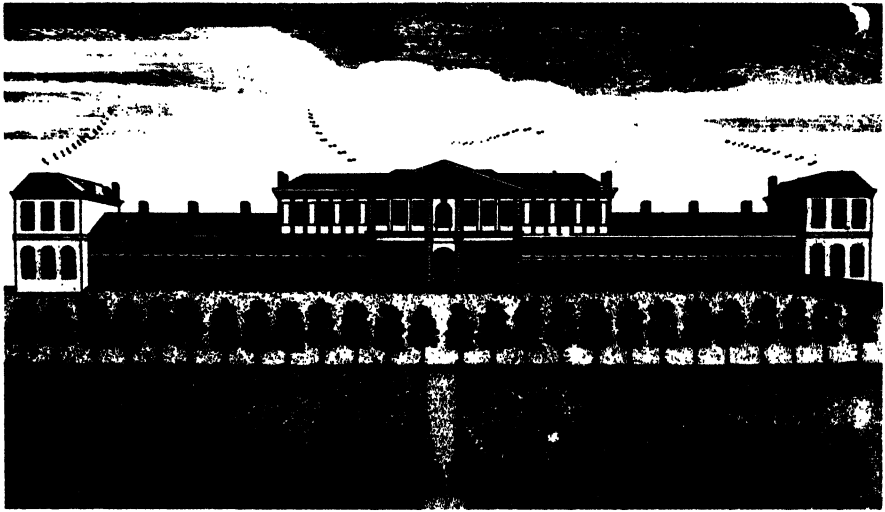
In recent times the dinners, though sumptuous enough on occasion, are marked by more sedateness of behaviour, and the fare is distinguished rather by delicacy of choice than by quantity. In this war, as in 1914-18, the Companies have held no dinners at all. Most of the Companies possess a splendid show of old plate which figures at their dinners, and not infrequently at museum exhibitions. Included in it are loving cups, which are still passed round the tables in place of the cumbersome old custom of "taking wine with the host." Companies are frequently called upon to entertain foreigners of distinction whom the Government wish to honour and distinguished persons from our own Commonwealth, and the existence of such centres of hospitality are of value to the State.

THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY

The expenditure of the Companies on hospitality was one of the reasons which led in 1880 to the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into their conduct. The Companies were openly charged with spending their income on "gormandising," and with having ceased to fulfil any useful function in the modern state, and it was therefore proposed that their Charters should be revoked, and their funds appropriated to utilitarian purposes.

The report of this Commission took four years to prepare, and is a bulky compilation in five volumes which is enough to discourage close analysis. But the general tenor of it may be briefly dealt with. It consists actually of two reports, one of which flatly contradicted and disagreed with the other. The majority report, signed by twelve out of fifteen members, was antagonistic to the Companies, and took a hostile view of their long-established rights. The historian of the Drapers' Company, the Rev. A. H. Johnson, after a long review of their arguments, came to the conclusion that "the Report of the Majority must be regarded rather as the expression of the opinion of certain Liberal and Radical politicians than one from a truly competent and unbiased tribunal, and the strong report signed by the Minority of three should certainly be consulted by anyone who wishes to arrive at an impartial judgment."

The Minority Report considered that the Guilds had carried out the terms of their Charters to the best of their ability; that as the control of trades had gradually disappeared, and the religious functions had been much reduced by the edicts of the Reformation, the main objects left to the Companies were those of hospitality and charity; also that the Companies' wealth was due to the fact that they had invested their corporate funds in City property, and had received bequests of land in and about London, which had enormously increased in value. Where such bequests had been in trust, it was shown that the trusts had been honourably carried out; and if the conditions imposed had become obsolete, equally useful objects had been substituted. In the case of land purchased under the terms of the Charters, this was shown to be as inviolable as any personal property could be, and no possible excuse for confiscation could be alleged which could not equally apply to friendly societies of every sort. Of the corporate incomes it was disclosed that on an average less than one-third was devoted to hospitality, and more than one-third to charitable purposes. No action was taken on the Report, but it undoubtedly stirred up the Companies to play a more useful part in the life of the country.



ALMSHOUSES OF THE HABERDASHERS' COMPANY AT HOXTON, LONDON
Engraving by B. Cole from Henry Ellis's *The History of the Antiquities of the Parish of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch*, 1798

CHARITABLE AND EDUCATIONAL WORK

In the Charter of Incorporation which Henry VI granted to the Mercers' Company in 1444, that scholastic monarch stipulated for the foundation of a grammar school in the City as part of their obligations. This developed into what is still known as the Mercers' School. But a greater responsibility fell upon them when Dean Colet, who founded St. Paul's in 1510, handed over its maintenance to the Mercers. St. Paul's is one of the many public schools which owe their existence to the generosity and care of City Companies; Oundle to the Grocers' Company, Merchant Taylors' to the Company of that name, Tonbridge to the Skinners, Aldenham to the Brewers, Gresham School, Holt, to the Fishmongers, Bancroft's and Howell's School for Girls, Denbigh, to the Drapers, Aske Schools and William Jones Schools to the Haberdashers; other schools all over the country which have owed their foundation to members of City Companies and at one time or another been administered by the Companies are too numerous to mention.

Passing from secondary to higher education, an undertaking of very great importance was embarked upon by the Corporation of London and the Livery Companies in 1880, when the City and Guilds of London Institute was founded to promote technical education and research. At the present time the Institute consists of the famous College in South Kensing-



CUTLERS' HALL, WARWICK LANE : THE INTERIOR
Engraving after a watercolour drawing by H. J. Fox

ton, known as the City and Guilds (Engineering) College, now part of the Imperial College and of the University of London, a small School of Art, and the very useful Technological Department.

Much money has been and is being contributed by the Guilds to the Institute, and the management is in the hands of representatives of the Corporation and the various contributing Guilds. The Drapers' Company were heavily involved in the original scheme, but some differences of opinion in management led them in 1884 on the invitation of the Trustees of the Beaumont Philosophical Institution to turn their thoughts into a new channel. Walter Besant in one of his books had envisaged a "People's Palace of Delight" in the East End, and with the help of the Drapers' Company the People's Palace and its Technical Schools (later Queen Mary College), were built on the old site of Bancroft's School in the Mile End Road. Much other help has been given by some of the Companies for University and technical education, and research. Instances are the extension of the City and Guilds College by the Goldsmiths' Company, who also

founded Goldsmiths' College and handed it over to the University of London and recently presented to the same University the Foxwell Economic Library and the building to contain it; the foundation and endowment of the entire Textile Department of the University of Leeds by the Clothworkers' Company; many buildings at Oxford, Cambridge and provincial Universities by the Drapers' Company; and the Salters' Research Institute.

A long list could be compiled of scholarships and other educational grants founded or awarded by the Companies and their members. There are also innumerable almshouses, pension charities, trusts for apprenticeship, and so forth, for some of which the Companies use their corporate funds, while for others they are trustees of funds bequeathed or given by their members. The voluntary hospitals of London, too, owe much to the City Guilds.

THE CITY COMPANIES TO-DAY

As one sees them to-day the Companies, or Livery Guilds, numbering between seventy and eighty, are self-contained societies of business and professional men, bound together by ceremonial observances which have been handed down for generations, and presided over by a Master and Wardens who are elected annually on a fixed day—generally the saint's day held sacred by the Company, and dating back to its birth as a Fraternity in the twelfth or thirteenth century. They have Charters which entitle them to acquire lands in mortmain, and to exercise jurisdiction over the trades from which they take their names. The more important ones have (or had until recently when so many were destroyed) beautiful Halls in which they entertain, and offices in which they transact their business. They are composed of two classes of members, the Livery, who are entitled to wear the Company's gown on state occasions, and the Freemen, who are not, but who are eligible for promotion to the Livery as vacancies occur.

The freedom of a Company carries with it a right to the freedom of the City of London. At one time a Liveryman was entitled to a parliamentary vote; but that privilege has lapsed except in the case of those who do not desire to exercise any other qualification. But the freedom of the City is a definite honour, conferred occasionally on eminent servants of the Crown, when it is usually associated with a decorative document enclosed in a gilded casket. A candidate for the freedom usually has to attend at the office of the City Chamberlain to prove his British nationality, and pays a fee of two guineas which goes towards the endowment of the Freemen's School.

There are three ways, besides honorary conferment, by which admission is granted to the freedom of a City Company. One is by inheritance from father to son, and is known as "patrimony." A second is by service as an apprentice, and is known as "servitude." The third and perhaps commonest way is by means of purchase, and is euphemistically termed "redemption."

Members of the Royal Family and the Peerage are often found among the Freemen of the City Companies. The earliest on record is Edward III, who became a member of the Mercers' Guild.

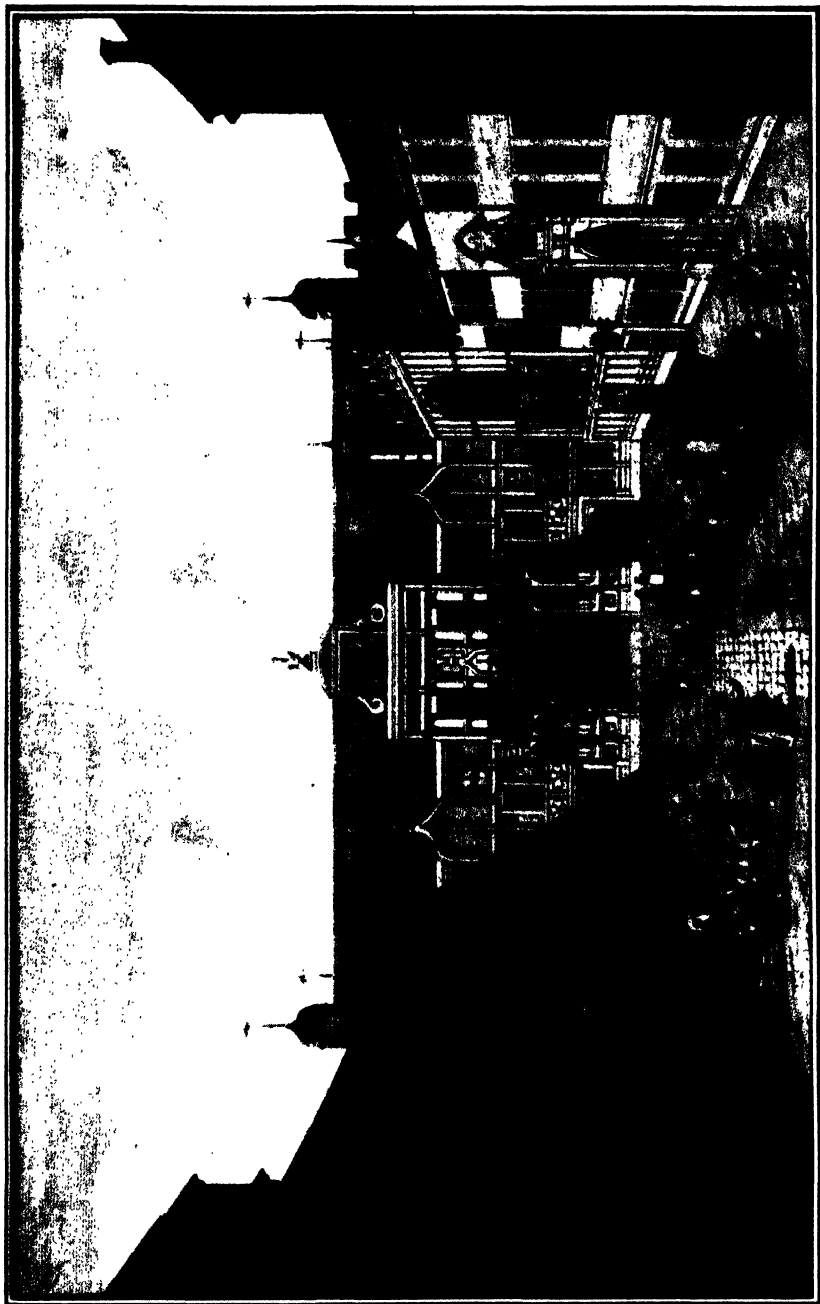
Some account has already been given of the autocratic power enjoyed by the Master of a Company during his year of office. The position is one of considerable dignity, but it used to involve a good deal of personal outlay on entertainments, and was liable in old days to be shirked on this account; so that the ordinances generally impose fines for refusal to serve, and such fines are to be found recorded in the archives. In the Goldsmiths' and Fishmongers' Companies and one or two others the Master is styled Prime Warden.

The Wardens of a Company range in numbers from two to four, one of them, entitled the Renter Warden, being generally entrusted with management of its financial affairs. The Vintners' Company has an extra Warden, called the Swan Warden, to superintend the marking of the swans on the upper Thames which are shared by the Company with the King and the Dyers' Company. The ceremony of sorting out the cygnets and marking them with a nick in the beak is carried out annually near Maidenhead, and is known as "swan-upping."

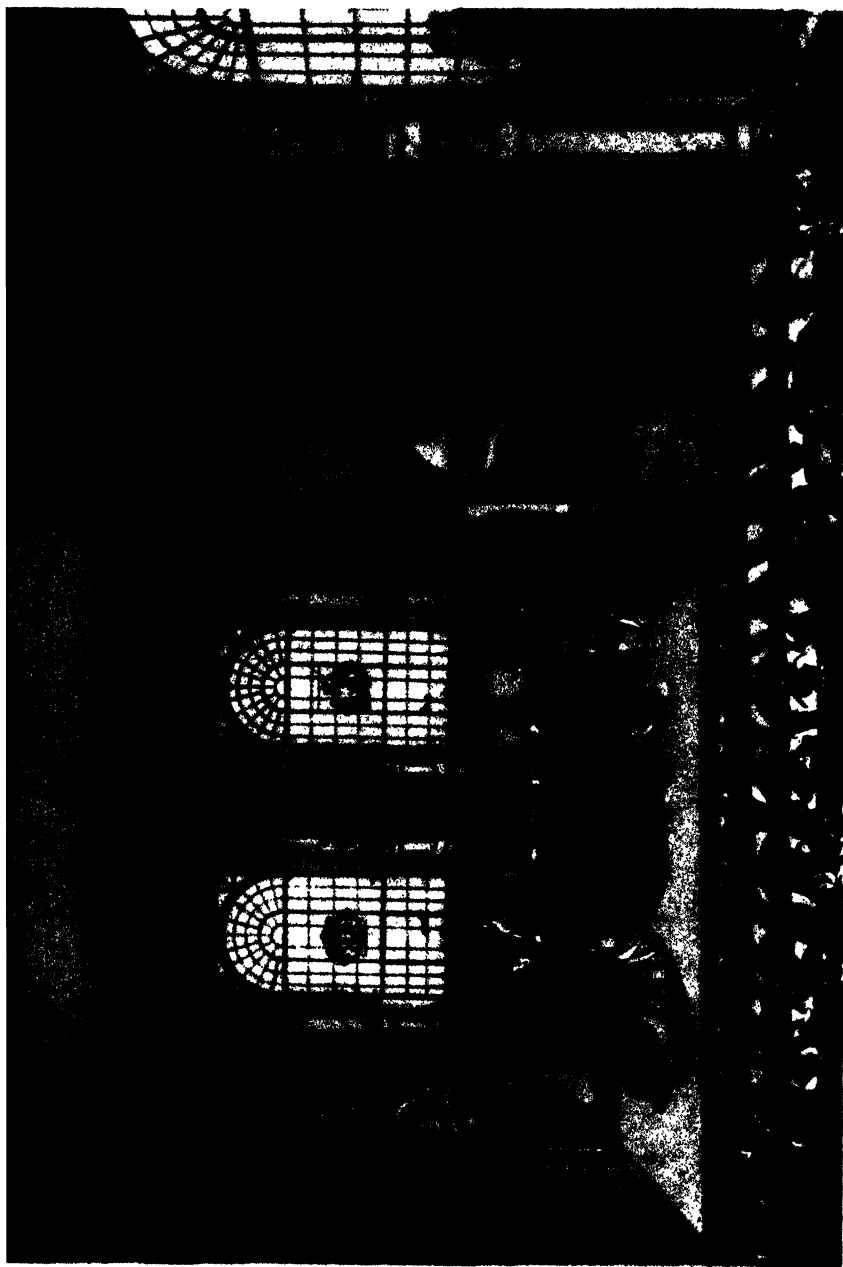
The Court of Assistants, formed mainly of ex-Wardens and Masters, was at first an informal body useful for consultation; but grew to be embodied in the ordinances, and in fact took such an active part in the management that they were frequently arraigned for tyrannical injustice, and were the cause of many secessions on the part of yeomen and journeymen. Now they are an essential and valuable part of the Company.

The earliest record of Assistants seems to exist in the Grocers' annals for 1379, where it is enacted that "at the first congregation of Wardens there shall be chosen six of the Company to be helping and counselling the same Wardens" during the following year. The Shearmen's Company in 1452 decided to elect twelve assistants, and owing to the disputes which had arisen over their conduct called on the whole community of brethren and sisters to make their choice.

The Court is the Governing Body of a Company, and its chief executive officer is the Clerk. Clerks were first found to be a necessity during the sixteenth century, and it is on their proficiency that the fortunes of a Company often depend. They have to possess legal as well as business qualifications in order to cope with the technical problems which arise, notably in the management of landed property. One of the many historians of municipal institutions has waxed almost lyrical in his estimation of the City Companies' Clerks. "The officer," he says, "upon whom more than any other the Master and the Company depend for all things either of business or pageantry, is the Clerk. We know scarcely any position which requires so much power of adaptability. He is their steward, their legal adviser, their conveyancer. But this is not all. Each Company has much of



A VIEW OF THE GUILDHALL OF THE CITY OF LONDON
Coloured engraving of the early nineteenth century
By courtesy of the Parker Gallery, London



LOTTERY DRAWING AT COOPERS' HALL
Coloured aquatint by Pugin and Rowlandson, 1809
From Ackermann's *The Microcosm of London*

ceremony and pageantry to maintain, and much magnificent hospitality. They employ no gentleman-usher or chamberlain to superintend their almost regal banquets. They boast of no earl marshal, no king of arms, no heralds nor pursuivants. The Clerk has to combine in his person the office of them all, coaching up, as we may imagine, the new made monarch for the year in all the bearings of his regality, and marshalling all comers, from the prince royal to the private trader, in due order according to the strictest rules of precedence. All this devolves upon the Clerk of these corporations, and consequently much of their prestige and dignity depends upon his qualifications." As a rather flat ending to this panegyric the author concludes that Clerks of Companies "may rank among the higher class of educated and intelligent men."

Another indispensable functionary is the Beadle, a sort of general factotum to the Master, Wardens and Court of Assistants, and liaison officer between them and the rest of the Company. In his blue or scarlet gown, and carrying the mace, the Beadle is an imposing personage, leading the Master and Wardens in procession to the high table, and presiding over the arrangements of the Hall. In old days it was his duty to summon the guild to meetings and funerals, to collect the subscriptions or "quarterage," and to distribute alms; his present-day functions include these items and have added many others.

Each Company has its Chaplain, who conducts the saying of grace at table, when it is not sung, and who often undertakes the service in church which is still very strictly observed and attended by the members on election day. It is interesting to remark that in 1943 and 1944 impressive services have been held on Lady Day in St. Paul's Cathedral attended by all the Livery Companies, with the Lord Mayor as the chief Liveryman of the City, at their head.

PRECEDENCE

Rank, that is to say precedence, is a matter to which the Companies in former days attached so much importance that, as has been described, it not infrequently led to violent disputes ending in bloodshed. To-day the order of precedence is established by a list which was drawn up by the Court of Aldermen in Henry VIII's reign to neutralise these quarrels, and which has been generally respected ever since, although the principles on which it was grounded are not very evident.

As matters stand, the order is still headed by twelve Major Companies, familiarly known as the Great Twelve, which form a sort of self-constituted oligarchy. These are followed by sixty or seventy so-called Minor Companies, of which a few are to all intents and purposes on a level with the upper twelve both as to wealth and antiquity. They vary very much in size, and some are of small importance. The Twelve Great Companies,

which all possess Halls (or did so prior to the devastating air-raids of the World War) are the Mercers, Grocers, Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Skinners, Merchant Taylors, Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers, Vintners, and Clothworkers, the last of whom displaced the Dyers who now stand thirteenth on the list.

It is a curious sequel to this state of things that for many years past, the Mayors have seldom been elected from the Great Companies, who have, perhaps unfortunately, in most cases given up taking an active part in municipal affairs. Either their own business has become too absorbing, or else the City politics have lost their savour. The habit, however, of drawing on the Great Companies to provide the Mayors was so deep-rooted that for a long time when a member of one of the Minor Companies was elected to the Mayoralty he had to take up the freedom of a Great one. This enforcement was strongly resented by the latter because it involved responsibility for the Mayor's expenses. In the face of repeated protests and occasional instances of unpleasantness the custom was abolished, and the Mayor is now elected as a general rule from one of the Minor Companies. There are signs, however, to-day of a come-back by the Major Companies.

To return to the composition of the Great Twelve. While most are survivors of the merchant trade guilds, there are a few which represent the ancient crafts. Of these the Skinners and the Haberdashers are conspicuous for their contributions to the luxury of the times. The Skinners were importers and dressers of rare furs, such as ermine and sable, which were used in royal and judicial robes. Under Edward III the wearing of such furs was restricted "to royalty, the nobility, and persons who gave at least £100 a year to the Church." In the case of ladies, the law laid down that the wearing of costly furs should be restricted to ladies of "blameless or at least noble birth." Women of the town were forbidden to wear any furs but lambs-wool or rabbit, which were handled by a different guild. But it was an age of rich and gaudy apparel, and the Skinners held a monopoly of goods which brought them into close contact and favour, not only with the Court, but with all the best classes in the kingdom. The Haberdashers had similar opportunities for the manufacture of feminine fineries.

The Salters, though a craft guild, were more in the nature of merchants than producers, in the days when salt-fish was a universal necessity, and were established as important members of the mercantile community as early as 1378. The Ironmongers held a commanding position early in the fourteenth century, though they did not seek incorporation until 1463. Their wealth made them subject to terrible exactions on the part of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, when they had to provide inordinate quotas of men and ships; but they retained their loyalty until the still greater exactions of the Stuarts drove them to side with the Parliament.

The Minor Companies are too numerous to name in full. Among the most important of them, many of whom possess or did possess their own



THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL, THE GUILDHALL
Engraving by P. Shepherd from *London Interiors*, 1841

Halls, are the Brewers, Leathersellers, Cutlers, Pewterers, Bakers, Barbers (or Barber-Surgeons), Armourers and Braziers, Girdlers, Saddlers, Cordwainers, Carpenters, Painter-Stainers, Weavers, Stationers (now associated with Newspaper Makers), Coopers, Glaziers, Apothecaries, Loriners, and Spectacle-Makers. The last and youngest of the Minor Companies for more than two hundred years was that of the Fanmakers, who were incorporated by Queen Anne; but their position has since been appropriated by the Master Mariners, an honourable creation of modern days; and later still by the City of London Solicitors' Company, who were granted a Livery on May 24th, 1944.

There are, as is natural, many peculiarities and many anecdotes relating to individual Companies, of which a few may be picked out at random. The Mercers, for instance, had a curious prejudice against beards, and have been known to expel members who refused to shave. But that was in the sixteenth century. The Ironmongers' Court of Assistants is identical with their Livery. They also still keep up a Yeomanry. The Weavers have an Upper Bailiff instead of a Master. Journeymen hatters belonging to the Feltmakers' Company are always referred to as 'gentlemen.' The title is said to have been conferred on them accidentally by Queen Elizabeth in con-



GROCCERS' HALL IN 1853
Engraving by W. Salter after T. C. Dibdin

sequence of their smart appearance. The Vintners in 1363 entertained five kings at dinner, Edward III of England and the Kings of Scotland, France, Denmark and Cyprus. Their Court-room, built in 1446, is the oldest room in the City, and they are specially famous for two rare possessions, one an exceptionally beautiful funeral pall embroidered with incidents from the life of their patron saint, St. Martin of Tours, who gave up half his cloak to a beggar. The saint is also commemorated in a small panel of tapestry which may have been woven by the monks of St. Albans, but which anyway contains an inscription of the year 1466 identifying it with an English religious house.

Of the Grocers it is on record that besides being importers of spices (whence their original title of Pepperers) they were the first tobacco merchants, and gave instruction in the use of the herb. Their own members were so addicted to the weed that great offence was caused by their smoking at formal meetings of the Court, and a fine had to be inflicted for their want of decorum. The Haberdashers were always prosperous as purveyors of feminine trinkets, but their fortune was mainly derived from the introduction of pins. Formerly ladies had had to use skewers. Pins were so important that there was nearly a war over them with the Dutch, who first had the market. The Goldsmiths have a still more solid claim to fame as inventors of bank-notes, and the machinery of modern banking. Childs'

Bank was founded by an apprentice of a Goldsmith banker, who married his master's daughter in the best tradition of fairy-tales.

The Apothecaries, who started as collectors of medicinal herbs, and as what we should now call "quacks," waged a long war with the Royal College of Physicians over their right to practise, and were sarcastically lampooned by Pope. Addison, however, came to their rescue on the other side and they were finally able to establish their claim. From retail druggists they eventually rose to a professional level, and issued licences which are still valid for the qualification of medical practitioners. For these they secured the authority of a special Act of Parliament. The Apothecaries deserve mention also as the creators of the Physic Garden at Chelsea, a relic of their botanising days. From the Barbers, or Barber-Surgeons, came the Royal College of Surgeons.

Fruiterers and Gardeners are curious Guilds to find in London, but there they are. The former escaped some harsh regulations by agreeing to present the Mayor annually with a basket of the choicest fruits, and the Gardeners follow suit by presenting him with flowers.

The Stationers' Company has a long and dignified history in connection, not only with copyrights, but with the printing and publishing of books. It is amusing, therefore, to find it recorded that in 1632 it issued an edition of the Bible in which the word "not" was omitted from the seventh commandment, so that it read: "Thou shalt commit adultery." The error was considered serious enough to warrant a Star Chamber trial, and the printer was heavily fined; although it seems that the Company succeeded in pacifying Archbishop Laud sufficiently to get the penalty remitted. Finally here is an anecdote relating to the Painter-Stainers, who in 1743 invited Sir Joshua Reynolds to come to dinner and bring a friend. He chose Boswell, and this was the text of his invitation: "As you love to see life in all its modes, if you have a mind to go you can come at 2 o'clock. The Blackguards dine an hour later." Forty years later Reynolds himself became a Freeman of the Company.

THE CITY ELECTIONS

The division of the Companies into Major and Minor was at one time a vital factor in their importance. The Twelve began to rise into prominence about the middle of the 14th century, and gradually improved their position up to the 16th. The Mayors were chosen exclusively from their ranks; and for a time, with occasional set-backs, they monopolised the power of electing the Common Council. Thus in 1357 a summons was issued to thirteen leading 'misteries' to provide a Common Council. By 1376 this privilege lapsed, and the Council election was distributed to over fifty Guilds. Later still the elections were handed back to

the inhabitants of the wards from which they had been taken away.

But the Livery of the Companies still elect the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs and Chamberlains. The Mayor is elected annually in September, and the Sheriffs in June, the ceremony taking place in both cases at the Common Hall in Guildhall, where the floor is still strewn with fragrant herbs, and posies are carried, in accordance with an ancient custom dating from the time when epidemics were rife and the air was not too sweet.

This carrying of posies is a quaint habit which is kept up in connection with several City ceremonies. Judges at the Old Bailey have them placed on their desks. The Skinners carry them in lieu of candles in a solemn procession which they annually take to church on the Feast of Corpus Christi. The procession follows the election of Master and Wardens. It is a privilege granted to them by Richard II and embodied in their Charter, which has survived the Reformation.

THE LORD MAYOR AND THE CITY

The constitution of the City of London is unique in its independence of outside government. Within his domain the Mayor is a supreme ruler, owing allegiance to the Sovereign but nothing more. Outside the City he has the rank of an Earl. In feudal times the City was a barony, or rather a collection of baronies represented by the different wards; and the barons were self-governing and independent of the King except for loose homage. In 1191 London shook off its feudal fetters, and substituted for the Norman Portreeve a constitution of Mayor and Commune based on a French design, in which the Commune consisted of free citizens under a ruler of their own choice. But in some way the City succeeded in retaining the independence which went with its baronies, and has never, in theory, lost it. To this day when the sovereign wishes to visit the City he makes a formal application to the Mayor for permission. His procession is met at the gate nearest to Westminster (it is possible that this was the reason why Temple Bar was preserved when all the other gates had disappeared), and is stopped by the Mayor, accompanied by his Sheriffs and retinue, and bearing his state sword of office. On a request of entry being made, the Mayor with dutiful obeisance, hands his sword to the Sovereign who returns it, the keys are also handed over, and the entry is made. The ceremony is of course a mere formality, but it is not without significance as illustrating the City's claim to autonomous rule.

Of a similar kind is the ordinance which forbids His Majesty's troops to pass through the streets without permission. Only the Buffs, who are descended from the London Train Bands, the Grenadier Guards, and the H.A.C. who belong to the City, are granted the special privilege of marching through the City with bayonets fixed, colours flying, and bands playing.



QUEEN VICTORIA'S ENTRANCE TO THE CITY ON HER WAY TO THE GUILDHALL,
NOVEMBER 9th 1837

Coloured engraving by an unknown artist

The Royal Marines also have the honour in virtue of a grant of Charles II, who raised a corps of 1,200 men from the City out of which that famous regiment was formed.

The furnishing of troops for the Scotch and foreign wars was a heavy burden on London in old times, and has been referred to earlier. But nothing could exceed the splendid response which it has made to the nation's call in modern days. For the South African war the City raised and equipped a large force of Imperial Volunteers, the C.I.V., who fought with marked gallantry in that somewhat inefficient campaign.

In the Great War of 1914-18 it made what can only be described as a stupendous effort, for which no better words can be found than those of a distinguished City officer who took part in it. In this war, he says, "the 7th Royal Fusiliers (the City of London Regiment) which consisted of four regular battalions, three militia battalions, and four battalions of London Territorials, developed into fifty-nine special service battalions, the largest number of fighting formations provided by any single regiment. Its depots dealt with 153,000 men, that is to say more than the whole original Expeditionary Force. As such large figures can only be appreciated by contrast,

it may make the point clearer to say that the total number of Royal Fusiliers engaged in the Battle of the Somme exceeded the total Allied force at Inkerman, and that the Royal Fusiliers who fought in the War outnumbered the total belligerents in any of the great battles of the nineteenth century."

It is too early to speak of the City's contribution to the even greater war which opened in 1939. The City's "square mile," through Germany's action, has become in large parts a devastated area, in which lie the ruins of much that was ancient and precious, Wren's churches which replaced the former ruin of the Great Fire, and many of the beautiful historic Halls of the City Companies, with their Grinling Gibbons carvings and famous works of art. Of their movable treasures, such as plate, pictures and furniture, it is to be hoped that most are safe in places of storage, and will come forth again when London is rebuilt to take their place in new surroundings of dignified hospitality. The Companies have weathered many storms which threatened them with destruction, and despite their present losses are carrying on "business as usual," with those who have been lucky lending their premises to those who have not.

That time will repair the ravages and restore the Companies to their full measure of prosperity is a wish which all will share who appreciate the good work they were doing. In the meantime there is not a shadow of reason to doubt that they will continue the course they have been pursuing so successfully for generations, guided by the pious aims of their benefactors, and true to the spirit of the Corporation motto: *Domine Dirige Nos*.

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